



## **NEWS FROM NOAA**

**NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
March 20, 2006

### **HAWAII LONGLINE FISHERY CLOSED FOR REMAINDER OF 2006 TO PROTECT SEA TURTLES**

The shallow-set swordfish longline fishery based in Hawaii is closed for the rest of 2006, today announced NOAA Fisheries Service's Pacific Islands Regional Office. The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council recommended expediting the closure during a meeting last week because the fleet was nearing its 17 allowable interactions with loggerhead turtles. This cap ensures that sea turtle conservation targets are not compromised. Federal observers placed on each fishing trip taken by the fleet's 30 vessels recorded one leatherback and 17 loggerhead sea turtle interactions since the fishery opened on Jan. 1.

The swordfish fishery was completely closed in April 2001 because of its impacts on sea turtles. It was reopened in 2004 primarily due to new technology developed by NOAA Fisheries Service in the Atlantic that significantly reduced sea turtle interactions with fishing gear. The regulations that allowed NOAA to reopen the longline fishery stipulated that the swordfish fishery would close for the remainder of the year if the number of allowable interactions of leatherback (16) or loggerhead (17) sea turtles was reached by the swordfish fleet.

The fishery operated in 2004 and 2005 without reaching the allowable interactions. Scientists speculate the difference this year may be due to an oceanographic condition that has concentrated the size of the swordfish fishery and reduced sea turtle habitat; possibly increasing turtle density in the vicinity of the fishery. Observer reports from the 2005 fishing year show that all sea turtles were released alive.

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with federal partners and nearly 60 countries to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes.

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On the Web:  
NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>  
NOAA Fisheries: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>

